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TITLE: Condom Use Attitudes Among Women In An HIV Prevention Program

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OBJECTIVE: To describe condom use attitudes and condom use of partners of women with transient housing attending an HIV prevention case management program. Methods: The Bridge to Respect (BTR) program is a prevention case management program serving disenfranchised clients. Outreach workers from BTR recruit participants of at least 18 years of age who report at least 1 sexual or drug risk behavior from a local soup kitchen. BTR clients complete an intake interview that includes demographic, social service needs, and sex and drug risk behavior questions.

RESULTS: To date 156 individuals have completed baseline interviews. 41%(n=64)of the sample were female. Of these, 77%were African-American. 20%Hispanic, and 3% Caucasian. Women were significantly more likely than men (72% vs 52%) to have a main sex partner (MSP) in the last 3 months; however, 39% did not know the HIV serostatus of the MSP and 31% of the women reported being uncertain that their partner was monogamous. MSP of 56%of the women never used condoms during vaginal sex over the last 3 months. Nearly one third (31%) of the women reported partners using a condom during the last sexual experience-however, if the MSP was supportive of the couple always using condoms, MSP were significantly more likely to have used condoms (OR=9.99, CI=2.15-46.5) during the last sexual experience. Condom attitudes also differed between women who used condoms during the last sexual experience and those who did not. Non-users (nu) were significantly more likely than users (u) to report that using condoms every time would make their partner angry (Mnu=3.1, Mu=2.0), decrease their own sexual pleasure (Mnu=3.2, Mu=2.5), decrease their partner's pleasure (Mnu=3.6, Mu=2.4), and would be a lot of trouble (Mnu=2.8, Mu=1.9). Furthermore, nonusers were significantly less likely than users to report that using condoms every time made them feel like a responsible person (Mnu=3.9, Mu=4.6). feel safer from HIV/other diseases (Mnu=3.9. Mu=4.7), and prevent pregnancy (Mnu=3.7. Mu=4.3).

CONCLUSIONS: This population of women is at increased risk for HIV infection as many are unaware of the HIV status of their partners, as well as whether or not their partners are having unprotected sex with others. Understanding the barriers to condom use for women and their main partners is critical for the development of prevention interventions. Similar interventions for these women and their partners that are designed to address HIV prevention behaviors should target negative attitudes towards condoms and support the identification and development of positive attitudes and beliefs, and basic condom use skills, to increase use. Interventions should also target both partners in order to increase support for condom use within the couple's relationship.

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